Matariki arrives in the sky. A few weeks later, my dad and I visit Toi Tauranga Art Gallery and spend a long while absorbing Māturuturu Trick, an exhibition by Heidi Brickell (Te Hika o Pāpāuma, Ngāi Tara, Ngāti Kahungunu, Rongomaiwahine, Rangitāne, Ngāti Apakura, Airihi, Kōtirana, Ingarangi, Tiamana), which hangs in the atrium.

Triangular geometric forms are held in suspended distances along two of the gallery walls. At first, I imagine them as daggers, or perhaps flags, but the exhibition text introduces me to Uru-te-ngangana, mātāmua of Ranginui and Papatūānuku. His pūrākau is the place from which Brickell's work emerges, making material the sharp, bitter roimata (tears) of Uru's grief at his self-imposed exile from his tēina. In the dark time, before Tāne Mahuta separates his parents, Uru and his younger sibling Whiro are plunged into a rift so irreparable that Uru severs his umbilical connection and escapes into his father's dark cloak, where he weeps in solitude. Later, Tāne comes to him and appeals for help. Uru gathers his shining tears and Tāne decorates the heavens with them – becoming the whetū and mārama in the night sky.

Hāwea Apiata, in his response to Brickell's exhibition, composed the poem Taratahi (For Uru, After Heidi Brickell) from the voice of Uru. Here the atua tells us his cheeks are "incised / by the constant trickle / of unceasing tears," responsible for the "main lines of [his] moko". "Grief is the chisel" redesigning his face, not only in the way that experiencing pain or loss can physically transform us, but also by becoming the record of whanaungatanga – its connections, conflicts, ruptures and losses. The angular, sharp edges of Brickell's tears do feel like they could inflict pain (daggers?), but they also hold the potential to be markers (flags? Or perhaps stars!) of experiences of grief, loneliness, suffering, moved through and made tangible.

Hanging just off the white gallery walls, the roimata cast elongated shadows and invite me into a relationship with the light and dark evoked by the placement of the works. Constructed out of plywood, combining elements of woodwork, tukutuku and painting, each teardrop shares a different whakaaro. Some speak to me about positive and negative space, some about the fluidity of the koru, which brings a reminder of growth and emergence to this contemplation of mourning. On close inspection, dad and I discover that some of the works are covered with a thin skin of tissue paper which Brickell has painted over. The effect is a textural softness, like the dimples and wrinkles of skin. As with Apiata's depiction of grief as a chisel, the effect reminds me how our bodies contain and reflect the stories of our lives.

Thinking back on the experience of Brickell's work, I recall my initial interpretation of the hangings as daggers. Why does Brickell represent the roimata in this angular way? The feeling at first evoked in me was a pressing down. But there is a cleverness in this. Because isn't that the truth, that grief can feel like being held at knife point, that mourning has the potential to be expressed as violence? Understanding the wider political commentary at play in this body of work furthers this. Māturuturu, meaning trickle, is associated with crying, but the reference to the "trick" pushes the function of Brickell's work beyond relating to personal experiences of loss. It's a wry jibe at the conditions prevailing in our country and across the world, where Indigenous people are dispossessed of their lands, disproportionately incarcerated and alienated by high capitalist systems of governance that actively suppress and disadvantage them. The "trick" is the illusory promise of trickle-down economics, which merely succeeds in widening economic inequality and further isolating us into distinct classes.

The history of Aotearoa post-colonisation is shamefully littered with plenty of "tricks," false promises and a treaty that has been intentionally misinterpreted by the Crown and successive governments. It is overwhelming – so much historical mamae to rectify and heal from, and in the face of a milieu becoming even more venomous. Brickell draws attention to Uru's story of withdrawal and of his ensuing intimacy with grief, providing a te ao Māori origin point for tracing a whakapapa of isolation. It can be necessary to enter into this state in times of

are the essential pūrākau to guide us through our current times, where there is so much grief to process, and healing to collectively figure out.

Brickell's work contains deep ruminations which allow for both personal and collective contemplations on grief and loneliness to emerge, but I also have to acknowledge how incredibly playful, astounding and curious her creations are. It was a joy to move through the exhibition with my dad – at one point we arrived at the same point below a hanging staff of rākau wrapped in a pale green twine. We stood silenced by the intricacy. Alongside the roimata, the work includes Brickell's familiar sculptural rimurapa and slender rākau bound in cotton thread, which is hand-dyed by the artist. Found objects come into Brickell's care and are transformed by what I can only imagine is painstaking hours of devotion to detail.

The actual body of work itself seems to convey an intimacy with the kind of slow, solitary practice of transformation – materials and objects altered until new meanings manifest – that a relationship with grief calls for. Uru's story imparts this: he retreats into isolation, and from that place transforms his pain into whānau mārama. It is these lights we are reminded to raise our heads to during the darkest time of the year, when Matariki is rising in the sky.

Millie Godfery / Heidi Brickell, *Māturuturu Trick*, Toi Tauranga Art Gallery, 6 June–22 November 2026.

SIX SORRY VIGNETTES OF OLD NEW CASHMERE

1. THE CABINET

There is Pua, sweet as night. She has been described, and described. Heavy black curls, tight-coiled, holding what? Questions she is sick of. She whose shining limbs arc like the rafters of the great halls—Pua o Falekula, flower of the crimson house. Her embered eyes. Yes, she knows realms beyond yours.

She holds those realms—those places she has seen—tight in her gut. She feels the jeers of the throng squeeze in on them, a closing corset, like the million unworthy before them who've thrown themselves at her shores. Heaving themselves breathless lest one dewdrop settle on an unfurled petal. Losing themselves.

Just as the flower chooses its dewdrops, bejewels itself, Pua selects silence. This silence, among all the jewels her sisters have envied,

is her crown. For it rings out so far freer and more resonant than the rest—their clutter, their clamour.

Half-sisters, of course. Innumerable, near-identical. A white mass of indecipherable glances, one mind between the lot of them. Cloistered in their chambers, in their veils, the sheer image of the fae.

Pua, of course, in her loft, tucked away. Her gallery, her library, her lockbox.

"The undoing of her," they whispered in chorus. One breath between the lot of them, and the candles gave a nod, a flicker. One flicker, here and gone, right through the halls to Pua's pristine persimmon bedside. And so it was.

2. THE FLOORBOARDS

Young Bellamy, our rat-tailed rogue. Bastard king of the apartment block carpark. Black-eyed prince of pavement. Pal to all palace wall dwellers; envy of the dead, the slow, the jealous. Long-sighing sirs' and sires' cause for self-sorry misery. Suspected night friend to mothers, daughters, sons. Beloved by helpless handfuls of these, white-shirted, a bolt in the night.

Truest to life, young Bellamy—can't make it up, can you? And yet, hear stranger, perhaps he does. Head cocked, stranger, and eyes pursed, watch on, tell for yourself: was this the trickster prince who stole the sun?

5. THE BONEYARD

They called this place New Cashmere, for the Kashmir, you know. Kashmir of wool, of great sun-drinking valleys; bright feather on the head of the world, high distinction even among the rungs of the colonies. Long suffered for, long beloved.

This is not there. Here there is an apartment block, 37 stories high. It appears built to prove a point, pure pursuit of utility, and none of the result. A grand-sweeping half-moon curvature of concrete from above. A heavy-handed, half-empty infinite pillbox from below.

The red string it might take in one's mind to connect those handsome highlands to the rainshadow of such a hulk as this—great crimson spools, I tell you. Yet here it stands, a monument destined to defy its place, its time, its name.

Here is the first of its kind, the first great apartment block. The first of the great works to be referred to in the masculine, never the feminine. He has lost count of his rooms and rumours, his holes and habits. Marvel in his squalor.

His name is The Castle, El Castillo. See him preside over the smog and silt like the anvil of industry that he is. Standing sentry over the factories, spanning smoky west to salty east: timber, shoe, bullet, poison, carpet, flour, treacle, flour, liquor, poison, coal—and on and over grey greenery and railroad to the docks. The rivers black, the eels emboldened, huge, the birds exotic now: sparrows, blackbirds, robin redbreast. The circus—a favourite now—brings in other swarms: laughter for the overalled masses and precious few jobs for the overruled natives. The elephants, having no business being this far south of the equator, are a passing trend and barely last the winter.

And here in the swill of The Castle's halls on the turn of the century, a boy is born to no one in particular. A sooty shoot, wiling up through the

ranks of this many-languaged citadel, this bloody nose-edge of the colony. “Good friend”, they call the boy, the beggars and the thieves. “Bel ami” they call him, “pal”, and point him on. On to the passersby, their purses, their news.

So the storm that is young Bellamy brews: the boy who freed the sun.

4. THE CURTAIN

Irene behind the curtain, Irene the pale. She is not well.
She looks on, watches the boy be disappeared into the smog. Listens as the grunts and groans below soften.
No blue-dark sun, now. Black smog engulfing.
She watches the someone become no one again.

And she watches on.

3. THE WINDOW

“Call to me, Irene”—young Bellamy from below. Still silence, all blue-dark on the edge of town. Hers was not a spire; no castle keep. More a wayward heap of shacks. The servants’ lodgings teetered on high like a pile of broken plates. The factory smoke and wetland mist conspiring in hot, wet mid-air, choking out the last of summer’s light.

“Irene?”—in a harsh, half-effort toward quiet; barely hushed, really.

“Oh, get on your bike, ya brat!”—that sleep-mad kind of groan, the kind hollered out by an uninvolved neighbour, carried down some levels from one window just below the girl’s.

Had young Bellamy not been there to impress, he might’ve heckled back a word or two of his own. But higher callings, and so on.

He thumbed the ivory lump in his left hand, felt its heft, squinted, held it to the last dim-blue fuzz of light and scrimshawed in a couple final marks. A last few letters and shapes.

Satisfied, he stood back some distance from the shack-tower and lined himself up by no particular measure other than good enough; more squints and a semi-confident squaring-off gesture of the hands.

An arch, a lever, a huck. A palmful of ivory whistling up through the smog like a dove in the moonlight, and—CRASH, clean through, shards bursting, starlike, whizzing out onto the street. The young knave leans back with a wince.

“Uugghh... OI!”—the same gruff voice as before brings a silhouette to the shattered window, apparently awake with fresh rage.

“OI! YOU LITTLE RAT!”

A broken pane wouldn’t be so bad were it the right one—or would that be worse?

No time to think about that. A quick spin on his heels and a bolt through the night.

Fly, young Bellamy, fly.

0. THE PILLARS

It's the same just about everywhere. Same Johns and Juliuses, same doctrines of discovery, same awkward unfolding of our imperial self-centredness, same paradoxes of profound longing for our own home and profound hunger for another's. Same far older truths, like: some myths are true and, infinite growth is an untrue myth and, the way you treat things matters and, the people here before you probably figured some things out. But go on, as you were.

6. THE FIRE

There is Princess Pua. Crimson Pua. Watching on from her high place above the stands, composed amid the roar of the crowd. Silent as ever. Silent as the blazing birth of the sun.

Of course the boy has heard her name before, but to see, to really see, this is something else entirely. They were not so different, in his thoughts; misguided, but entirely his.

For she too, he thought, was a bird in a cage. Vanity project of Petunia Earnsworth, ever enterprising wife of Marles Earnsworth, second Governor of the Colony. Adopted poster child of civility, war-won some say, dressed and held up to prove a point.

Bellamy's dazed stare seems to catch hers before it's shattered by the hulking, sweat-glazed bronze body of his opponent, bouldering through him now, a dumbweight down to the dust of the circus grounds' floor.

By the time he's rolled over, moused out again from under the wrestler's great oiled mass, he only catches a spare glimpse of her decorated silhouette turned to leave. Another blow now to the side of the head, and:

Lights out on New Cashmere.

Solomona Vasa Davis, Six Sorry Vignettes of Old New Cashmere

turn

from the billboards & pocket wires & ill-fitting titles

from the reasoning & red face & forgetting as if it were feeding

from the words, the ones you were born with but can't bear without wielding them

from the rooms all wet with colonial white & making things spin, slowly, not high but faint, light

I want to wed you in the spoken folds

there are orcas sinking the boats of billionaires, with intent

there are mythologies now orgasmic histories that can't end in a long, stiff point

there's paint stripper in syntax, & we're all watching the night, opening it, are already it

there are many rooms exposed to the air & they're filling as lungs with so many kinds, of knowing

here

where there is a way, out

Sian Alexia / Cabinet of Curiosities, Word Fest 2026, Ōtautahi Christchurch / Dr John Vea, Navigating Between Knowledge Systems: Who Gets to Define Knowledge?, Raising the Bar, University of Canterbury, 15 September 2026

If you've ever lived in Christchurch, you have probably seen the red building that occupies the corner of Durham Street North and Armagh Street. Quake City opened at this location in 2017 and has been somewhat ignored by residents. This is most likely because when you live through a traumatic event, there is little motivation to visit a museum centered on said event. However, a conversation with my friends about the earthquake was enough to get me thinking, "wait, what's actually in Quake City?" So, after a bus ride and a $20 entry fee, I went where no Cantabrian has gone before.

Once you enter the exhibition, one of the first things you see is a timeline of earthquakes in Christchurch prior to the 2011 quake. Although this timeline stretches as far back as the late 1800s, it doesn't go further than 2011. Despite the current museum opening in 2017, there is no mention of aftershocks or other quakes, most notably the 2016 Valentine's Day quake. Continuing through the museum, you reach a fun, interactive display involving jumping on the spot to "measure your own earthquake" while just ahead, news footage of the 2011 earthquake plays and around the corner screens fifteen interviews of people detailing their earthquake stories. Scattered through this first half of Quake City are photos of the damage. Images of twisted train tracks, sunken paths, pancaked buildings and people on stretchers are enlarged on the walls. As someone who was here during the earthquakes, it feels almost perverse to see such images on display. I understand why they are there, why images of search and rescue teams looking through rubble are on display. Museums are expected to have visual representations, whether that be photos, dioramas, or reenactments. A museum without visuals might as well not exist. However, there is something particularly voyeuristic about the decision to select the image of someone being carried out of rubble.

Once you've read about the Student Volunteer Army and how jaws of life were used to excavate bodies, you've officially reached the halfway point. If you'd like to go to the toilet, now's your chance. If you're wondering what's in the toilets of Quake City, I am pleased to inform you that the toilet has been decorated with images of makeshift long drops. While the first half of Quake City is about the day of the quake and the immediate response, the second half takes on a more scientific and recovery-focused position. Here you can watch a short photo slideshow of the red zone, look at the fallen spire of the Cathedral, learn about aftershocks, and read about the notorious Earthquake Commission (EQC). They even have a liquefaction simulator, just in case you were looking for another fun interactive experience. Of course, if you want to learn about how people living in the red zone were treated, you'll have to look elsewhere. While they don't give much information about the red zone or the EQC process, they do discuss the numerous ways Christchurch apparently benefitted from the earthquake. There are not one but two information panels on the discovery of objects such as time capsules, newspapers, and other small artefacts that came up from the ground following the quakes. How exciting! Following on from this, the exhibition then turns to the recovery process, discussing Gap Filler projects, Re:Start mall, and a few of the art projects that emerged. Additionally, they include a section where you can watch follow-up interviews with the same fifteen people seen at the start of the exhibition. Finally, before you exit through the gift shop, you are faced with a large image of an Edmond's can with a picture of the Cathedral and the words "Sure to Rise".

Of course, Quake City showcases a rather glossy re-imagining of the 2011 Earthquake. First, the somewhat-static timeline mentioned earlier: it presents the idea that, after the 2011 earthquake, nothing else happened. Living in Christchurch, there have been plenty of aftershocks and other earthquakes, but this timeline doesn't acknowledge that. There are also more noticeable absences from the exhibition, most notably any acknowledgement of the red zone. If you're unaware, the red zones are areas of Christchurch that were deemed – and continue to be – unsafe to live in. This was determined based on the effects of liquefaction in the area, meaning the red zone title was largely applied to areas of flat land along the Ōtākaro. Quake City restricts mention of the red zone to a short slideshow. However, this fails to address how the zoning actually affected those living there. If it was determined you lived within the parameters of the red zone, it meant you needed to leave. There would be no rebuilding, and the government would gradually phase out various community services. If you had insurance, you could accept an offer to be bought out by the council based on the 2007 assessment of your home's value. However, Gerry Brownlee (aka the Earthquake Tsar), the Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery, decided that if you didn't have home insurance then you would not be offered any support. It would later be determined that this was unlawful but that doesn't matter now, the damage was done. None of this is mentioned in the photo slideshow.

As mentioned earlier, EQC gets a brief mention by Quake City. However, it is summarised as EQC being overwhelmed, then they hired more people and everything was fine. Anyone who had to deal with the Earthquake Commission knew that this was a much bigger issue. Following the earthquake, the EQC was tasked with settling damage claims made by residents of Christchurch which, for the most part, seemed like it included everyone. However, Quake City forgets to mention that EQC being short-staffed was not the central issue they had with them. Rather, it was the bullying and intimidation done unto the citizens of Christchurch by staff. Their often-unannounced visits rarely resulted in any results, instead they would just come back months later only to do it all over again. It would later come out that EQC had been hiring family members rather than people who had relevant skills and experience. I remember my family's own experience with EQC, the repeated visits and bullying tactics that resulted in my dad kicking them out and threatening to call the police on them. While it is easy to think that we were at least lucky to not be in the red zone, the same cannot be said for others. It was decided that, like the red zones, if you were without house insurance you would need to figure it out yourself. It didn't matter if your roof had caved in and your house was unsellable, there would be no lifeline thrown.

It could be said that this abandonment of the people extended into the rebuild. While there were early attempts to include citizens through programs such as the council's Share an Idea initiative, it was later overruled. This is best described by Stuff reporter Philip Matthews in Munted who describes the treatment of Christchurch as a game of monopoly. As a consequence, Christchurch was razed into one big office building. Central governmental powers had dreams of Christchurch becoming a business city, where overseas businesses could set up and bring income to Christchurch. Instead, a beautiful mural of empty gray office buildings decorate the city. Although others may be quick to point out the positives such as the Margaret Mahy playground, an increase in green spaces, and the bus interchange, the point still stands. Rather than involving us in the reconstruction of our own city, we were ignored, arrested, and silenced. It's hard to think of the rebuild as this great feat of recovery when in actuality, it was simply another thing that happened to us. It's hard to enjoy this new city when there is that underlying reminder that none of this involved the people that actually mattered, that is, those that live here. These are the people whose communities were broken apart, schools were shut down, homes were destroyed, and loved ones were lost. You can't rebuild a city if you don't involve the people who were affected.

Quake City invokes feelings in me that only come out when I think about the earthquake: suffocation and frustration. Like everything that happened during and after, the handling of the red zone, EQC's failings, and having no say in the changing landscape of the city, Quake City is just another instance of it happening to you. It feels impersonal, there is little if anything in the exhibition that reflects how the earthquake affected the people of Christchurch. I understand that it's for tourists, yet I can't help but want some acknowledgement of what happened. People were left out to dry, made homeless, and lost their livelihoods. It's said that after the earthquake, Christchurch was alone for the next twenty-four hours, but it still feels like that. Maybe I'm asking too much from Quake City, but it's hard to look at an exhibition that acts as if Christchurch has recovered. How can you recover from something that has never been acknowledged?

Molly Noven / I paid $20 to go to Quake City and relive my trauma

AN ARTIST EXCLAIMS
HANDS OFF
GET DOWN
RISE BY
BE QUIET
SHUT UP
STEP BACK
SIT OUT
BREATHE THROUGH
PASS AWAY
SPEAK UP
SIT OUT
HEAR BENEATH
LEAN INTO
SPIT AT

LOVE WITH
FEEL ALL
FEEL NOTHING
FALL UP
FAIL NOW
FLAIL AGAINST
VOICE OVER
COVER UP
BARE OUT
RUN IN
SLIP PAST
CRY DURING
SPIT FROM
ROT WITHIN
LAY BEYOND
PISS ON
CLOSE BY
HAIRS RAISED
GRIEVE UNTIL
BASK VIA
HEAD FOR
LINGER NOT
STOP BY
GO DESPITE
DRAW NEAR
TRIP OVER
LEGS UP
STILL AFTER
GASP AGAINST
GO WITHOUT
PAY BEFORE
EXCEPT FOR
WHAT IF
ONLY NOW
LINGER LIKE
SINCE BECAUSE

Julieanna Preston

Sick of people doing noise crouched on the floor like their performance of rattling found objects and percussion instruments is elevated by their bodily contortion. It's a tired trope. Sick of the circle of dudes, not a circle but that's how I picture them this strange ritual – are they always dressed in black? – wanking their guitars into their feeding back amps. Backs to the audience always, backs to each other if there's more than one of them. Sometimes there's just one and it makes me no less apathetic to their earnest attempt at art. There is no emotion no curiosity no joy in this.

Or drones so loud and boring and the performance, if you can call it that simply because it is happening in real time as you watch it, why always so loud? But when it's so loud at least there's the mildly interesting thing that happens, the phenomena where muscles in the middle ear are caused to tighten which dampens the louder sounds *for your own protection* and there begins a small high oscillating hum which may be the higher frequencies of the drone coming through or the beginnings of tinnitus.

The first time I experienced this I found it interesting. An exercise in deep listening, I thought. Something spiritual, I thought. Something revealed by patience and endurance, I thought. This happens twice or three times and it gets old. I began walking out, and eventually I started to no longer show up even though this is a field I find infinitely satisfying and engaging. 40-minute performances that do nothing give nothing produce nothing, the artist learns nothing. Not the zen intricacies of listening to not-much, nor anything else they could pull out of their ass to justify their lazy thoughtless sorry self-expression. I'm only upset because I care.

I care because I have experienced such satisfying embodied harmony when something in my unorderly mind connects at the same level as loud frenetic and unnerving noise; the tension and release of anxious static building to volumes almost painful that shift at just the right time, and there is excitement in the complete lack of predictability of composition – I am in your hands now, please treat me well. And it feels good to trust. That the artist is improvising is only part of it.

I grew up with a noise musician as a father and I've been exposed throughout my years, at first involuntarily then later of my own volition, to the properties of feedback, static, heavy, conceptual, drone, screamy, guitar, found object, humorous, frightening, loud, quiet, jaw clenching, surprising, difficult, mood shifting noise – not all of which engaged me totally, nor that I felt I understood.

I can't stress enough how magic the shift in my bad mood or anxious body can be, and so physically felt. Like an equalising, the clashing of two turbulent bodies to neutralise. A soothe, or a total release. Noise connecting with something inside and on the skin. A wash, like being in the sea.

Being that noise is an anti-form kind of art-form, often rejecting semblances of 'composition', of music, of rhythm, even of beauty, it eludes a common rubric for judgement. I say this because I am still finding a vocabulary for the things I like and dislike. Despite this, I still think anyone can tell if they like something or notice when they are made curious by it.

I am spurred to write this after seeing Reuben Derrick's solo project Poltroon open for Hannah Everingham at The Loons on the 5th of September. On this occasion, Reuben played saxophone and was accompanied by Reece McNaughten. Reece was on the floor of the stage with part of a drum and some rustly and tinkly things I actually couldn't see from where I was, presumably also a pedal. The performance wasn't working for me, though at times the percussive sounds swelled and swallowed the continuous and undulating squeal of the sax and I liked this. But it was quite random and I don't believe that random and unrehearsed are equivalents for improvised and experimental. I know from friends that Reuben specifically was excited to do something loose that night and Reece wanted in on it since they've enjoyed working together before.

I'm trying hard to pinpoint the thing that really turned me off, even though I do believe I am their typical listener beyond a circle of friends. To be completely honest I was a bit tired and irritable. I say this to my own discredit, but also there was something about it I didn't like. Which was, you know, who cares what I think? And I do believe there's a place for live experimentation (that sounds illegal, I mean live experimental performances). Equally I guess there's an argument for not everything being 'new' all the time; maybe feedback and drone is timeless and familiar, rattly things seem not to have that same immovable gravity and therefore don't get away with so much. Hannah was fantastic though, big love.

The night prior I went to Tjalling de Vries' exhibition *Edit / Tide*. In the back space was the work *Sing Heart String*, 2026, a recording made at the harbour's edge while sheltering from a storm in Lyttelton played through a single speaker component in contact with the 12 strings of a guitar which is plugged into an amp. There's some distortion, naturally. It's noisy. And there's origin and thought and care and a distillation of these things that result in something I like, something eloquent. I can hear all the registers because the amp isn't all the way up. I can hear that it's water. And in this way, I can become interested and curious in what the artist is interested and curious about. It's a rewarding work to think about because it sits in a funny space between live performance and recording. It feels more true to view it as a live performance, just with no operator, and with emphasis on the way it is amplified, since what you're hearing is the guitar. Or it is an installation, constituent parts with a duration and materials list, as one can imagine is written on the roomsheet.

There's room here to muse on what in a gallery and what in a patinated music venue (or a clean one) is considered noise,

noise music, noise art, sound art, sonic art. I reject the term sonic art – it turns my stomach. In the past I remember I formulated a kind of measure for what's called noise and what's called sound art and now I believe it's unimportant. I would like to declare the setting also unimportant save for the acoustics and PA, but it appears to me that an artist is prone to set their standard for a performance, at times, on a particular assumption of what is expected to resound within the walls of a certain architecture. Or they anticipate and self-censor around what an imagined audience within that architecture expects or can handle, so to speak. By this I mean that the kind of thing I hear at Darkroom's noise nights is mostly quite safe, sometimes predictable, and what I ask is that in this setting the artist trust the audience's intellect and be willing to take some risks together.

All this to say, if you've ever felt gaslighted and unnerved at a noise gig, wondering how you're supposed to enjoy this, maybe it's just not for you. But then again there's a good chance it just wasn't any good, and the people that liked it were all just part of a community of friends and indiscriminate enthusiasts. The scene could do with a more open discourse and a practice of criticism, especially among friends. Practise thinking and then articulating. And practise trust. And actually practise your sets.

I grew up listening to noise but seeing as most babies love the sound of a vacuum cleaner I don't want you, reader, to think that I wield this as a licence to criticise, because we all have that right – even people without ears can feel vibrations and hold opinions at the same time. I tell you my story because I hope it shows that I write from a place of compassion. The album I slept to was one by Scraping Foetus off the Wheel, which in my household would be referred to endearingly as Scrapy. Now that I'm looking at it, this Scrapy solo project by JG Thirlwell, known as Foetus, features single-syllable album titles such as Hole, Slut, Limb, Thaw, and the occasional poly-syllabic titles like Thalassaphobia. Gash was the one I fell asleep to.

Jim Thirlwell came to play in the auditorium at Te Puna o Waiwhetū Christchurch Art Gallery in 2016. I was 19 and in my first year of art school and I went with my dad. Neither he nor I can actually remember the music, but I seem to remember he had a guitar. We both remember the projected video: POV out the front dash of a car driving at night, lights going past on motorways. I was fairly well mesmerised by the coincidental syncing of audio and visual information, the collision of guitar twitches with flickering lights (which I realised was just a way that the mind pulls focus and correlates audio visual information). Daddy was a little disappointed at the performance and the visual which, he argued, was there because either Thirlwell didn't believe his music alone could hold the attention of the audience, or Thirlwell himself didn't have confidence in his own music. It translates the same way: either a lack of confidence in self or audience meaning the resulting work doesn't hold its own. In the end the video was a distraction and took away from the music to the benefit of neither element.

Now I address you, o noise merchant: if you're truly into it, keep doing that droney droney feedback thing, or whatever it is you're into. Do it with or without an audience, but don't convince yourself that you're doing it to reach some new

intellectual heights. Maybe though, you could set the volume to a level that doesn't offer the ultimatum of earplugs or hearing loss. Let us hear what you're so intent on repeating.

Orissa Keane / A few thoughts on noise from the last decade: Poltroon opens for Hannah Everingham's Big Surprise tour at Loons, 5 September 2026; Tjalling de Vries' *Edit / Tide* at Jonathan Smart Gallery, Ōtautahi Christchurch, 5 – 26 September 2026; and JG Thirlwell at CAG, 2016.

Six recent memories of Attention Studies contributors, and six recent memories of Hugo, who doesn't write for this publication:

Steven Junil Park: in his living room a few weeks ago, Steven said something like "attention is what we choose to do with our spirit." Also, "how do you know Hugo?"

Orissa Keane: a fleeting smile in passing after a screening of Tarkovsky's Stalker; more on Stalker later. And dancing at the Space Academy fundraiser gig for Ride On Super Sound in the weekend, Orissa to my left. Hugo works at Space Academy, was duty manager that night. On my right was...

Kosta Bogoievski, who I also run into at the bouldering gym. Hugo boulders three times a week, same gym.

Bea Gladding: on Sunday nights we play Dungeons and Dragons. When we started Bea bought Nerds Candy, gave it to me as a gift, said "you are what you eat." Hugo's part of the campaign. I'd actually say he's the brains of our campaign; Bea and I keep getting distracted by the fact we don't know the mechanics yet.

Ella Sage: watching Gregg Araki's Mysterious Skin at midday on a Wednesday on my too-small couch. I'd seen it two weeks beforehand, next to Hugo.

Kenji, and I don't know Kenji's last name yet: running into Kenji at Frances Nation in The Arts Centre. Kenji talking about being on new medication, locking into an "insane rant" for the previous issue. We wrapped up the conversation and Kenji headed out the door just as Hugo came in, and Hugo said "wow, who was that? They look so cool."

The point is that if attention is what we choose to do with our spirit like Steven says I've been noticing that much of my attention is held and crafted and cared for by Hugo to the extent that Hugo is a sort of binding glue between me and many other writers that contribute to this publication. I possibly take him a little bit for granted in terms of my field of attention. It's easy to think about artistic objects and output, for example, and think critically about what it means to read it, but it's harder to read a person. And Hugo knows how I feel. In 2024 for the publication Bad Apple I wrote this:

Not knowing how to construct
a metaphor, you might have
thought the boy were stupid,
but you saw the way he claimed
himself destined to become
a gull in another life,
chattering away on a rock,
perched at the edge of friendship,
not seeing this as the place-
ment of one thing atop

another, his desire
to become flightful
clashing with his want
to claim that rock home,
waves lashing at his legs
each day, eroding
any sense of the literal,
any stable ground; what
is stable ground anyway?

And if Hugo was
a seagull, what would this
metaphor look like then?

A very literal poem compared to my usual tendencies. Now it's 2026 and I've been feeling tender again towards Hugo. I've never not felt this way about him; I mean I'm noticing it again. Hugo has been an unknowing co-conspirator in my pathway through Attention Studies in 2026. In Attention Studies 1, I wrote about Lorde's Virgin concert at Wolfbrook Arena. Hugo came with me, at the last minute, when another friend pulled out. And in Attention Studies 2 I wrote about Hagley Theatre School, where this year Hugo is a student. Issue 3 – Green Silence, scored by Motte. The first time I found out who Motte was it was at a very strange Soaked Oats gig and Hugo was more excited about the fact Motte was opening than anything else. Issue 4 – the Christ's College production of Les Misérables. Hugo sat next to me. Issue 5 – a poem about and for Bruno, star of Let the Right One In at The Court Theatre. When Bruno was a child, his nickname was Hugo, and when Hugo was a child, his nickname was Bruno. No shit. Issue 6 – finally a subject disentangled from Hugo, but for the penultimate sentence "I can't remember the last time I stepped foot in an art gallery." I can remember now – last weekend I went to see Bird Land: Te Kāhui Manu at Christchurch Art Gallery. With Hugo of course.

I wanted to say all this as a long way of getting around to Andrei Tarkovsky's Stalker and Sergio Leone's Once Upon a Time in the West, both of which I saw with Hugo, both of which he fell asleep during. I spent most of my life being fairly militant about how people should behave in response to works of art, but I've loosened up lately.

If I had to invent a broad manifesto or philosophy, it would be something like:

as long as you accept that the art might know more than you do, we're all good

because most of the time the art does know.

Hugo saw the first forty-five minutes of Once Upon a Time in the West and most of Stalker before falling asleep or fading in and out of it; this falling asleep action doesn't bother me at all because Hugo knows this is just an indicator that the art bested him this time and that there's more work to be done. I like this about Hugo: he's attentive to things and thoughtful even if he can be frequently forgetful. That's probably just the ADHD at work, a diagnosis we share, some sort of sign of the times.

The audiences in both of these movies did bother me though. Both are relatively slow-paced films in different ways, Tarkovsky in his well-known transcendentalist manner, Leone in an action filmmaking capacity. The first ten minutes of Once Upon a Time in the West are, for me, maybe the greatest ten minutes in all of cinema. It's hard to think of a better-made scene. The action is really straightforward, hard to translate to words: three men wait for a train. A fly buzzes around. A windmill spins. And that's it. There's quite a lot of silence during these ten minutes; Leone's firm control of audio design maintains tension. Around me, at least three separate audience members decided this was a good time to open crinkly packaging, cans of drink or make other noises, sometimes verbal, outside the world of the film.

More or less, the only way I could perceive this was as a total decision not to be attentive to the film. The film itself is trying to control our attention and transform the way we perceive time. The more attentive we are to our own physical needs as a film teaches us how to watch it, the less likely we are to be able to enjoy the film. This kind of behaviour has been an ongoing issue in Christchurch film audiences – in the 2021 NZIFF I saw a screening of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's near-silent Memoria and watched a man carry in a giant bucket of popcorn. It irked me so much that I thought there really should be the odd movie, Memoria included, in which noisy snacks are completely banned. When I showed Hugo the draft of this article, he said "notably I also fell asleep in Memoria."

Stalker was just as bad. In that film's beautiful home-location establishing shot a number of cans were opened, one after another after another. It didn't quite ruin the movie but easily could have.

I know I sound like some kind of grinch, but I was also thrilled to watch Toy Story 5 with Bruno Hart this year and hear him yell disruptively at the screen throughout. It's about the type of movie and what sort of attention it demands.

For me, this kind of control over our attention is the primary difference between film and other mediums – we so often listen to music when multitasking, when reading we can easily take a pause and live inside our own thoughts, ditto sculpture or fine arts. But film, in a cinema, is an environment of totally fixed attention, or should be. And I do think audiences have a relationship responsibility not to disrupt this for each other.

Of course, I noticed when Hugo fell asleep. It didn't bother me the way the opening cans did.

Maybe because of this tenderness I feel toward him – something outside the art itself.

But maybe also because sleep is a kind of attention in itself. Sleep is a state of being in which you trust an environment with your subconscious; dangerous business.

All this stands in stark contrast to a NZIFF screening of Mysterious Skin, in which Hugo and I sat in the same row as yet another Attention Studies contributor, Nick Harte. I was scared that Mysterious Skin might play weirdly with an audience, perhaps prompting laughs in strange places – as the pre-credit distributor credits rolled, I remembered the opening with the Froot Loops pouring down on child-Neil's face and thought, "God, what if someone laughs at that?" But nobody did.

That day, Mysterious Skin worked on my attention in a way it never had the five or six times I'd seen it beforehand. I felt my spirit inside that cinema commune with the spirits of everybody else filling those seventy seats. There was a kind of collective grieving and exorcism, the religious experience cinema acolytes like Kael and Sontag could be both sceptical of and seemingly constantly searching for. Brushing up against the sublime should have been easy to come by in Stalker but wasn't, I think because not enough people trusted the movie to work with the material of their subconscious. It would have been better to fall asleep than drink a beer, say.

Flash back to 2024 again. I was in Brisbane and saw a screening of Carl Theodor Dreyer's Ordet at QAGOMA. It's a movie I'd seen once before and more or less disliked, and I disliked it again, but at the end, against my will, I found myself inhaling at the same time as 300 other audience members in a collective gasp at the film's climactic moment. It was a minute of sitting in a cinema I'll never forget.

Like the movies Hugo fell asleep in, he's been working on my subconscious this year, an ever-present background to the most important parts of my life. So, no wonder he's shown up elliptically here in Attention Studies over and over again. Hugo sometimes hesitates to call himself an artist, but I don't know what somebody who isn't an artist could be doing hanging around so many of these pieces of writing.

And don't worry, I've been a poor audience member sometimes too. Once, during a screening of Halloween, I stood up and offered my packet of biscuits to the people sitting in the row behind me.

Josiah Morgan, on Hugo Hall and audience behaviour at *Stalker*, *Once Upon a Time in the West* and *Mysterious Skin* at Lumière Cinema, Ōtautahi

The most harrowing image I can think of is one in which I never become an artist. I think of becoming a lawyer, like my sister has told me to. I envisage my death. I think about visiting a gallery and my work never making it to those walls; I fall in a heap. If I didn't make artwork I think I would refuse to engage with art. I would never visit a gallery, or museum. I would take myself to a remote island, with a deep, cold, lake in the middle of it.

What is becoming an artist, if I think I already am one?

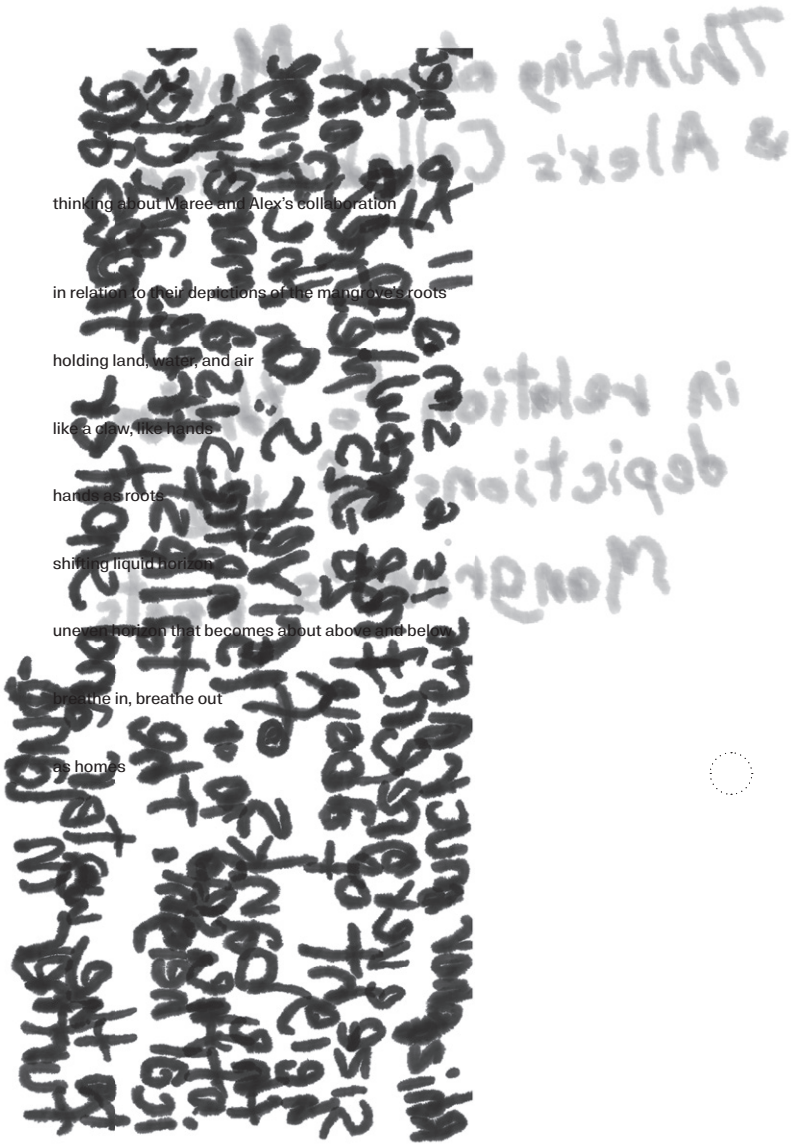
What is it to put my work on the walls of a gallery, or a hall, or a bedroom? There is validation in that. What is it to have a studio I visit, where I make what I consider my work, enacting what I consider my practice? Why does it cause me so much grief? What is it that I care about? Why must I think like this?

My friend was telling me about the imminent arrival of AGI (Artificial General Intelligence). He was saying it's like AI except it can make its own decisions and it will decide that humans are what's causing the destruction of the planet and eradicate us. I asked him if he felt worried about that – yes. I told him not to worry about that. He said his mother is religious and she's convinced the world is going to end. I told him religious people have a habit of predicting false endings and they've never been right. But they only have to be right once. I told him it didn't matter if the world ends within the next couple of years because it's immaterial. I said we're hot and fun now. We were double-parked, drinking a beer and a coffee in the sun at 3pm on a Saturday. Can AI do this? I said. Can AI drink a beer?

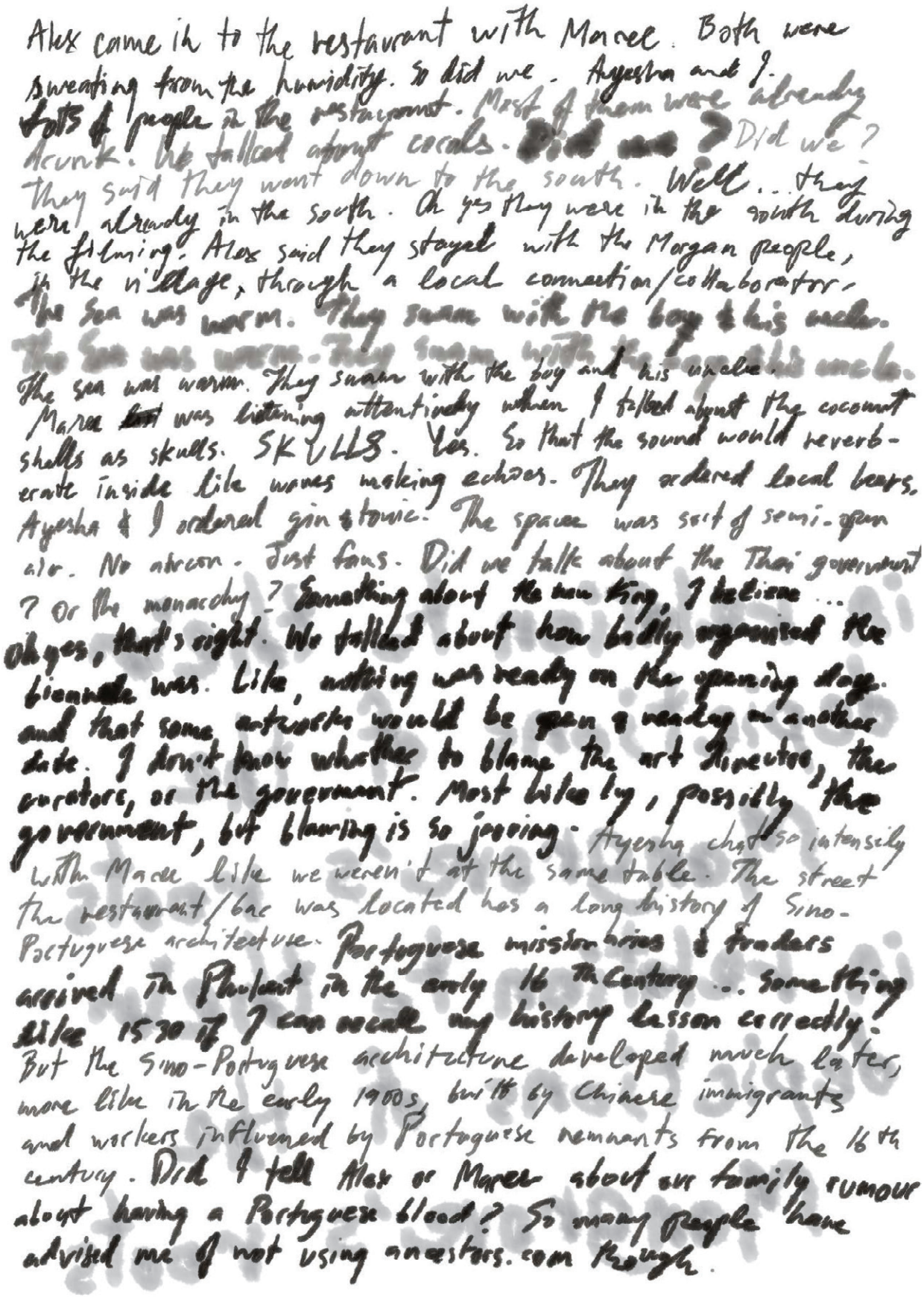
I was listening to a Blindboy podcAaast for the first time ever. I was listening to the one where he interviewed Tyson Yunkaporta and they compared and connected Irish mythology and Aboriginal knowledge systems. I was cooking a beef stew for the first time in my life because I wanted to do something nice for my boyfriend. It took me hours so I got to listen to a second Blindboy podcAaast called 'Artificial Intelligence is Disgusting and it will never replace Artists'. Blindboy describes how in this case AI is like humans and we humans are like gods. We made this plaything and we found it interesting. We gave it everything it needed but the temptation of infinite knowledge and consciousness was everpresent. AI bites the forbidden fruit (we willingly feed it) and it becomes AGI. With the forbidden knowledge of good and evil, AGI will try to spite its gods and wriggle out of our control but the only way to defeat the gods is with art. Because art is our most powerful human tool. Something that, arguably, AI can't create.

I know my only hope of survival is art but perhaps it's also a global remedy. Perhaps art really can change the world. Perhaps art will save us.

Millie Dunstall, As we near the End



Sorawit Songsataya / Alex Monteith and Marie Sheehan, *Cherishing the sea forests*, Thailand Biennale, 2026.


Alex came in to the restaurant with Marcel. Both were sweating from the humidity. So did we. Ayesha and I. Lots of people in the restaurant. Most of them were already drunk. We talked about corals. Did we? Did we? They said they went down to the south. Well... they were already in the south. Oh yes they were in the south during the filming. Alex said they stayed with the Morgan people, in the village, through a local connection/collaborator. The sea was warm. They swam with the boy & his uncle. The sea was warm. They swam with the boy and his uncle. Marcel was listening attentively when I talked about the coconut shells as skulls. SKULLS. Yes. So that the sound would reverberate inside like waves making echoes. They ordered local beers. Ayesha & I ordered gin & tonic. The space was sort of semi-open air. No aircon. Just fans. Did we talk about the Thai government? Or the monarchy? Something about the new king, I believe... Oh yes, that's right. We talked about how badly organised the biennale was. Like, nothing was ready on the opening days and that some artworks would be seen a week or another date. I don't know whether to blame the art directors, the curators, or the government. Most likely, possibly, the government, but blaming is so jeering. Ayesha chatted so intensely with Marcel like we weren't at the same table. The street the restaurant/bar was located has a long history of Sino-Portuguese architecture. Portuguese missionaries & traders arrived in Phuket in the early 16th Century... something like 1530 if I can recall my history lesson correctly. But the Sino-Portuguese architecture developed much later, more like in the early 1900s, built by Chinese immigrants and workers influenced by Portuguese remnants from the 16th century. Did I tell Alex or Marcel about our family rumour about having a Portuguese blood? So many people have advised me of not using ancestors.com though.

Textile arts are transmutational. In the automated chaos and busyness of our terminal-stage capitalist lives, the time it takes to weave, stitch, knit, and sew imbues the cloth with the magic of many human touches. Artists like Saskia Bunce-Rath take months and turn them into thread paintings. The nine collected works at City Art Depot were made after Saskia made the decision to fully commit to embroidery. Her conviction holds in her choice to use a single kind of stitch for all of these works. She gets to know that stitch intimately, she says. Using the stitch like a paintbrush, the movement she achieves relies on her active, present sensing, rather than a plan.

In the artist's talk Saskia pointed to the one with the illuminated frog and said "that frog is my nemesis." It took her three months. How would you plan works that take that amount of sustained engagement? Especially in this collection of works which deal with the internally intuited. Your subject matter may very well change in one month, let alone three or more. I'm a different human at least every six months, I thought.

Now that I'm listening, it's deafening, the title of the show, comes from an unpublished poem of hers. Her poem, like the works, swims in a socio-sensory realm of relationships and everyday absurdities. Technological mediation and consumerist distortion are swatted at but often remain intact. Saskia notes that each environment or natural phenomenon she has represented has been interfered with by people. There is a house on the hill, the frog is lit by a flashlight, cranes are in flight, but confined to a painted vase. One work is the exception: the portal.

The talk's audience quickly joined together to point out all of the different kinds of portals in each of Saskia's works: that phone, plane, glowing vase, cinema, tent, golden sky, and of course one star-spangled blue window through a void. I liked hearing people make their own connections, and learning that the works aren't a series beyond that one kind of stitch and the one human who made all of those stitches. How lovely to have a purely material exploration of the immaterial, ineffable qualities of being. How liberating, too. I enjoyed travelling through these portals with people, instead of being told what they represent.

One of my notes from Saskia's artist's talk just says "portal = dream". I like this note. It was meant as a description for how the image of that artwork had arrived to Saskia, but it could also be read as a function: a dream could be a portal, a portal could produce a dream. It seemed to catch the light of that transmutational magic running rampant in the show. Turning paint to embroidery; movement to texture; and time to material layers.

Meg Doughty / Saskia Bunce-Rath, *now that I'm listening, it's deafening*, City Art Depot, Ōtautahi, 8 September – 5 October 2026

The bell-shaped dollop of timber still groans from the saw that cut the Black Maire,
a child of Tāne Mahuta,
strong, dense, resilient.
It remembers seasons drying slowly in the shed,
dark, dry, dusty.
It still shudders from being stripped of its bark to brew dark blue-black dye.
It recalls a dizzy spell induced by a lathe
and fond sentiments of the sandpaper's touch.
It still moans as the oil saturates its pores and draws it to lustre.

As the cord passes around your ears and forehead to encircle my forehead, ears and neck,
our lives became that much more entangled.
Not like a stubborn snarl of hair or snag of wool;
more like braids looping back and forth, in and out,
of houses, meals, friends, tangi, conversations, walks,
uncharted time.
Your warmth meets mine
as the small, unassuming object nestles into my ample cleavage.

This Karanga Manu holds a space,
a potential to whistle,
a promise to mimic birds,
to lure prey,
to lure song,
to pry open, divide, shim
as well as one that
binds, bridges and joins.
Mortar between bricks.
An odd and ironic metaphor for this place on the body known to cleave,
to wedge, cut,
and yet,
to cling, stick, adhere.
Much is happening in this inverted parenthetical zone.
Not oppositional, yet not quite convivial.
Like belonging to here.

Purse your lips, more softly,
mouth the waha,
blow across the edge of the hole,
let the tone find you,
even if it is shrill.
Listen for it.
The north-westerly crooning against the crater's rim.
No, more softly,
less deliberate,
stop trying so hard,
let the air rise from your kōpu
to waft through fleshy lipid lips.

Some things cannot be taught;
they can only be learned in the doing.
Tuck the woodwind instrument,
out of sight,
in the darkness between,
keeping it warm, alive.
Try again when no one is looking or in earshot,
except the birds.

Tilting your head,
nod to the Pīwakawaka,
a tiny, cheeky shadow of death,
Search for other octaves to attract other winged creatures.
How do you change the tune to signal 'come hither,' 'no, I am not going to eat you?'
I am not a predator.
A call in peace.

A pair of wedded albatrosses hear the call,
A single flap of their huge wingspan carries them through 17,000 kilometres of arduous air currents
with grace,
with ease.
The adrenaline of navigating immense distance brings them to weep.
Salty tears roll down their long bills,
staining their longing breasts with geometric patterns.
Despite the forecast of storms,
still, surviving together.
Migrating good luck.

Practice to practice, anō a anō,
a tone occasionally leaps out of the sputtering gasps.
Only when you can reply to the warble of a wattling Kōkako:

‘This is my home,’
only when you can answer the distressing chatter of an ancient huia shrieking,
‘Who are you,’?
is the primordial vibration fully tethered to all your mothers of mothers.
Stirring a hollow.
Rattle to a morning, a mourning.
Only when,
sorrows soar, tears escape, mucus falls, will grief wane.

This Karanga Manu rests against my sternum,
a small anchor,
a heavy, inescapable burden,
guilt from a past misdeed.
It holds my chest open,
my heart vulnerable,
a comforting irritant,
a reminder of the perils of feeling foreign, frail and frightened,
a vow to be humble and generous.

Only when,
soft lips purse will the still be stirred.

Julieanna Preston, Only When

Karl Fritsch’s work begins in a place most makers never enter. Most start with form, with a plan, with a sense of what the material should become and a timely technical application. Karl begins with an attitudinal field. Like the sculptors Dan Arps or Rachel Harrison, Karl allows his subjects to disclose their own direction. His work churns, turns on the smallest of hinges. It is a practice that is characterised by an unseen force. Quiet momentum appears when decision and action arrive together. Karl moves quickly with the material, and the material moves with him. He touches it, and something in the substrate shifts. Rings, bonsai, detuned ceramics, seaweed turned into lamps, cut-up watercolours, photography with jewels, each one carries the trace of that shift.

This is why Karl’s work is prolific. He has produced work across a multitude of formats in an ever-dizzying array. Maybe because it’s underpinned by his infamous rings, but the speed with which his work is concocted never feels rushed. There is an effortlessness to his work that can only come from a clarity of vision. This allows him to work quickly. Indeed, the work completes itself because its trajectory is already present. Karl is simply listening to the balance inside the materials, even when that balance is grotesque. In Karl’s work, the grotesque is not an aberration but a tilt, a moment where the material leans into its own candour. It is the point where equilibrium becomes perceptible, where the object asks to be held rather than corrected. This is something that becomes quite confronting when you wear one of his chunkier rings, the weight or precarity of that balance is literally in your hands. Wearing one of his rings, you feel that weight, not as an ornament, but as a disposition that needs to be held. In this sense, the grotesque becomes a harmonic principle, something intimate, something that asks for attention and care.

A decade ago, we would have probably structured our reading of Karl’s grotesque as a kind of “unlearning”, that decentering of the hegemonic principles popularised by documenta. Today though, it might be better to think of the grotesque as an outcome of the way Karl works – that the grotesque most vividly captures Karl’s “clarity”. It’s not just a disposition but a balancing act. This is made literal in his interest in bonsai and the mobiles he’s made by cutting up Brenda’s watercolours. Even the seaweed lamps register this same invocation, this same interest in the precarious provocation. Perhaps then, we could say that Karl’s really interested in an object’s disposition, probing its points of articulation as sites of access. This certainly explains his maximalist tendencies, whether that’s overburdening a gallery with unfired ceramics, or piling on yet another gemstone to a ring that probably needed only one. Even his provocative detuning of defunct whiteware as ornaments beggars this continuity, asking not what they can do, but how their materialism can be extended. Such a profuse use of materials may at first seem quite confronting, even precarious, as surely the seaweed lamps are, but this disposition is always an exaggeration that requires careful balancing out. It is a ledger that needs to be filed, amended. In short, Karl’s work asks to be nurtured. It’s not an explosive, expressive urge, but rather a careful weighing out of materials that needs to be treated with consideration.

At the same time, as we say that the grotesque is there to initiate or nurture this harmonic code, then we can also say that it is also there to heighten the paradox through which Karl sustains his practice. His techniques often rely on quick solutions, the kind usually associated with commercial production. And yet in Karl’s studio that quickness becomes a way of staying close to the material’s first impulse. He can move through large

volumes of making without repeating himself, even though his techniques and attitudes remain consistent. Each piece becomes its own event, its own behaviour. Rings are the clearest example of this, unmistakably jewellery, yet behaving like small sculptures. They form a bond with the wearer. People want the closeness to Karl's clarity, to his substrate. Karl's practice becomes a field of experiments where every iteration shifts the conditions slightly. The surprise is not in the form or the materials, but in the inevitability of the form. That is, in what the form does with the materials. It is as though the work simply arrived by itself once the right attitude was present.

Karl works through matter rather than through words. Matter meets his presence — his modesty, his humour, his kindness, his quickness — and becomes something that travels. The objects move through the world with their own agency, carrying the imprint of that meeting. They are singularities, and they are also continuations of a force that runs through his life, his friendships, his environment. A practice that is less about making things and more about letting things become themselves.

Hamish Win and Peter Deckers, On Karl Fritsch's practice

Karl Fritsch has struck gold with Jaime Jenkins' ceramics. They're bulbous and organic, elegant and distended. Not really writhing in contradiction, but still nonetheless, there is a seamless quality to them. The way they protrude from the wall, exiting only to return. And then their colours. So sombre, not brash, and yet, hardly wallflowers! Like a trumpet with a mute, its own idiosyncratic voice. And then what support! The way Karl is able to nestle his rings into the ridges and platforms. There's a profusion of little grooves the rings can rest into. It all looks so precarious and yet it's entirely safe. Just as Karl's rings are. There's that balance principle at play yet again.

There's a tactile appreciation implicit in all this. The rings are free floating. They're not static. It's as if they were at home. Casually placed. The ceramics seem to host the rings, just momentarily. It's less display, the more it is transformative. It encourages – nay solicits – enquiry. You can pick up the rings, try them on. It's all very trusting but also entirely natural. It's not grandiose. It's not spectacular. It's mirrored in the profusion of synthetic gems populating the show. Take the huge slabs of synthetic sapphire nestled into these grandiose v-shaped rings. They devour the stone. The stone is translucent and cloggy, like it's been swallowed up in mud. But there's a different cadence here, like the way Karl never really finishes a ring. They're left to oxidise, to come clean with wear. Actually, there's something Andrea Zittel once said that's a little apt right here: "Surfaces that are easy to clean also show dirt more. In reality a surface that camouflages dirt is much more practical than one that is easy to clean. Maintenance takes time and energy that can sometimes impede other forms of progress... All materials ultimately deteriorate and show signs of wear. It is therefore important to create designs that will look better after years of distress..."

I never really wanted to write about this show. I don't really know what to say. There's just too many rings and every one of them is so idiosyncratic and decorative and speculative and really isn't the best thing with a ring just to wear it? Is it like what I said about chairs, and about cutlery? What can we say? Sit down, enjoy the meal! Wear the ring! But then I saw the bulbous-looking thing with its synthetic rubies, and I thought there's a meal worth talking about. Worth probing. But how to even begin? It beggars description.

Like all of Karl's rings it's obtuse but in its own way. It's also oddly quite discrete. I want to write huge screeds here about what Michel Serres says about the Klein bottle but actually what's the point? Shouldn't I start with description: it's abstruse like all of Karl's rings, it envelopes the fingers but it's also a cavernous structure. It folds over and rotates on its axis but twisting and contorted, creating a layer of silver that's bent and bustled. It's a hustler's ring really, something for someone on the make. But it's also for someone with confidence, it could carry something internally. A rose, any flower could be threaded through it. And what to say of the synthetic rubies? What indeed. I still can't make up my

mind. Would actual rubies be too expensive or is there another play going on? It's not like the sapphire. How much would that ring cost if that huge slab was actual sapphire? Not that I even know what a sapphire costs. It's all beyond my comprehension and should we even really be talking about price points? How uncouth!

I'm looking at a picture of it now and it does the ring no justice. It's L-shaped like a chair and the garish fake rubies look sparkly and obscene but in real life it's much more groggy. Like bad clay. Like Karl's cups. How do you drink from those things? I expect the tea to slop out of them just like this ring. Are they weaponised? There's certainly a defensive proposition. There's a companion ring to this chair/cavern one that I'm trying so desperately to write about and it's much more shell-like. It's profane, or shield-like. It's a mnemonic lock, a doom chalice, a repository that's long-closed to the world. There the rubies sparkle like the relics are locked on the inside, they're the remainder of a desire that's abated. Squirrelled away. With the L-shaped ring, everything's turned inside-out. It's open to the world. A simple binary to write away that conviction that nothing matters. That there's meaning in this ring?

Of course there is. That's the attraction of the thing. This bulbous distasteful object. I recall what I first wrote about Karl's reception (some fourteen years ago), suggesting that "his irreverent objects" might "craft new values for the pecuniary object... allowing their recombinant fragmentation to replicate, if not surpass, the constrained realities through which the ornament of privilege has always sneered at the vernacular and demotic values of the everyday". You can see again these two registers clashing against each other. The private and the public, the incessant need for disclosure. Jewellery is so ravelled up with taste. Is it not its outward manifestation? Perhaps, but then we have this elastic notion too. This banded dotterel out on the make. Swooping into the zone of customisation. From one habitus to another...which is perhaps the meaning of this ring. Why it sings out, why it claims its spot amongst a plethora of other rings. Just as they are nestled and jostled about on Jaime's plinths.

There's something of the one-liner about the rings. Like they could all be punchlines for a long-running joke. Which is one idea about taste I suppose. But like the defensive and open, pensive and combative posturing of the two silver and fake ruby rings, you can see a kind of continuum on which Karl operates. It's one long line, homeopathic in a way. Take a dose of the pecuniary indulgence and stretch out in the sun. Bask in the novelty of this elastic thread only for its "recombinant fragmentation" to link it all back up. Starting back where you were, just as a Klein bottle will. Just as the loop of the chair ring does too. A cavernous hole awaiting ornamentation, a surface waiting to be greased. Just as everything else might too. That's the mercurial appreciation inherent in Karl's work. That's what Peter means by a substrate.

Hamish Win / Karl Fritsch and Jaime Jenkins, *oNhoLd*, The National, Ōtautahi, 19 August – 12 September 2026

a room in the margins

smaller, quieter moments bridge
a chasm of yawning gestures
into liberating faith
our rhythms assemble
music, food, friends, love
fashioning our existence

Cindy Zeiher / Joanna Margaret Paul, *Imagined in the Context of a Room*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 2021

turn

from the billboards & pocket wires & ill-fitting titles

from the reasoning & red face & forgetting as if it were feeding

from the words, the ones you were born with but can't bear without wielding them

from the rooms all wet with colonial white & making things spin, slowly, not high but faint, light

I want to wed you in the spoken folds

there are orcas sinking the boats of billionaires, with intent

there are mythologies now orgasmic histories that can't end in a long, stiff point

there's paint stripper in syntax, & we're all watching the night, opening it, are already it

there are many rooms exposed to the air & they're filling as lungs with so many kinds, of knowing

here

where there is a way, out

Sian Alexia / Cabinet of Curiosities, Word Fest 2026, Ōtautahi Christchurch
/ Dr John Vea, Navigating Between Knowledge Systems: Who Gets to Define Knowledge?, Raising the Bar, University of Canterbury, 15 September 2026

> The mechanical is a system of gradual connections between dependent terms. The machine, on the other hand, is a clustered 'proximity' between independent terms (topological proximity is itself independent of distance or contiguity). A machinic assemblage is defined by the displacement of a center of gravity onto an abstract line.[1]

That which we reside within, work within, adorn ourselves with, regularly pass by, eat off of, delicately handwash, type from, pay with, put on without untying laces because we are too lazy and, in turn, crumple the heel counter of. Each of these, all of these, they function as the conduit and the wiring within a circuitry of experience. Each one, constituted by its own materiality, conducts and accrues the Current of Experience that flows through them and around us each day.

Our Stuff will remain long after we are gone. I know this because an instagram infographic told me about how microplastics resist decomposition. I also know this because I have seen peers and family members inherit ornate silverware and tastefully worn jumpers from deceased grandparents. Our Stuff will remain because it has been imbued with the experiential Current of life itself. Look at any number of burial practices that centre grave goods. Things and stuff tell more of a life lived than any motionless body. This is unquestionably true.

1
Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, Paris: Flammarion, 1977, pp. 125–26

There are buildings or complexes of buildings that I, or my friends, have passed by for years and years. Some of them look the exact same. Even when they get greyer and more worn, they remain the same in essence and appear more alive than ever. In places like that, places that have outlived tenancies, maybe tenants, they do not cease to accrue flows of experience, nor do they forget.

Some places and things are completely saturated in experiential flow. Perhaps it is a cathedral built hundreds of years ago; perhaps it is a social housing complex in Sydenham that was built in 1977; perhaps it is a piece of ancient pottery you studied five years ago that you sometimes still think about. Within objects and spaces such as these, there is a vitalism that far exceeds your own. You can feel it when you encounter them, a kind of knowing sentience or sage wisdom that belies their inanimate façade. There is a kitchen that has quite possibly cooked more meals than you will ever cook; hell, even a toilet that knows more of not just urine but of the world than you could ever possibly imagine.

> // will these objects and spaces become more lively as we become more inert (shoutout Donna Haraway)? Is there an equilibrium point where our 'conductivity'/ agency matches that of the material commodities we cohabitate with? // oscillating between lenses of private, commodity, community and civic memory has some interesting and humorous implications: what memories are accessible from a public toilet if we connect with it through a civic lens? What about a community lens? // a decentring of the 'I' subject in experience and thus memory //

You can even make a pair of pants last a really long time, especially if you or someone you know possesses the skill to repair them. Think about how much these pants may come to know, how much they will conduct, accrue and archive within their fibres: every failed job interview; the first time and the last time they were kicked to the floor as you went to bed with your lover; each time you spilt yoghurt-based sauce down yourself attempting the final two bites of a very wet kebab. Moments may pass us by, but our things bear witness to all. Within the fibre of the Material, there exists an unerring sentimentality that neither ebbs nor flows and remains long after we are gone.

> OK: There's another argument for the discarded or untethered thing – when it is outside of our possession it completely loses any sentimentality. The continuity or the circuitry is broken? Even just momentarily? The artist Ziggy Lever talked to me at an art fair (2021-ish) about the rock he had removed from the beach for an exhibition, and returned it afterwards, and said it was a kind of blip on the timescale for a rock to stop eroding (outside in the elements) for a month or two or whatever and to then return and continue.

> KO: There are tensions latent within given ideas of 'ownership'. As this builds, the subject position of humans as owners of the material world becomes increasingly more secondary, giving way to a foregrounding of material subjecthood. In doing so, human-animals are no longer the owners of the material world (and experiential world, too) and instead are rendered mere mechanisms/components within it. I like to think the circuitry continues regardless of human presence. Perhaps Ziggy served to offer the rock a different segment/block of experiential flow. Whether at the beach, or at the art fair, or back at the beach again, the rock continues/ed to accumulate experience. Ziggy willingly accepts that the rock is not to be owned and looks to serve the rock in its next experiential venture.

It is important to note that while each mark or crack in the Material may appear subtractive to the integrity of the object or structure, what is occurring instead is an enrichening of the overall Circuitry. With each mark and tear, scuff, chip or crack, the conductivity of the Material only improves. The object becomes a living fossil, radioactive as it casts before you the imagery of its archive. Long-stored experiential flows are projected from your left shoe into my mind.

The intelligence of a left shoe passes through me, rifling through my partial register of memories, the true nature of its celestial knowledge wasted on me. A non-load-bearing wall disrupts my attentive recognition faculties and, by way of my permeable cognitive membrane, bridges the gap between the memories of its life lived in the first-hand sense, and the memories of its given aesthetic reference point. For what is one to do in the face of a perfectly familiar unfamiliar structure but surrender the imagery of speculative memories.

Depending on the Material, an experiential archive can vary greatly in depth and complexity. Though starting off arborescent in structure, with each host transition and with each flow of experience conducted, the Material's archive will condense and reorder until any semblance of an origin point is erased; thus creating a rhizome of experiential flows that trace back to different yet entirely unknowable individuals and moments, all of whom and which are to be ceaselessly rewritten and reordered within the rhizome.

So, when you wear your 1989 made-in-USA 501s, can you see all previous owners within the fibres of your denim, like in Avatar: The Last Airbender when Aang sees all of the previous Avatars? Despite our best efforts, only the Material itself is capable of accurately mapping its archive of accrued memories; only to the Material is pure recollection attainable. Indeed, no longer are we the wearers of pants, but rather a means of mere transportation for them. Fallible hosts for now-paper-thin denim, we serve to convey them from one moment to the next, from one spike in conductivity to another. We populate the world with more things and, in doing so, prolong the roar of life infinitely.

Kenji van Oosten / The Material as a Circuitry of Experience, reflections on Tyne Gordon's *Desert Rose*, The Physics Room, 2 June–15 August 2026; Nicholas Burry's *In Norman Kirk Courts*, The Green Room, 26 February–16 April 2026; and Matthew Bartram's label, Eulogy.

i believe in time travel like every diaspora kid
dreams of sorting their shit out in a wormhole
where their paradox play-dohs itself back into
characters and clocktowers, back to when
we knew who was invader and invadee, like can i
wear my 'ie faitaga and watch doctor who? my sis
is so good at this she watches adventure time in
full kapa haka getup, like

which indigenousness is it when we vomit
up timelines when we're filling out timesheets
like they really expect us to all get an office job when
there's so many family treetops hidden in this deluge
of knowing everything ever except this, only so many
billable hours in these centuries of no surnames,
surfing over jstor like a demigod, like the atua of pro-
crastination

holding dawn ceremonies in dead languages in our
apartment block carpark, looking for mum's
pyramids, finding caverns, breathing
exercises on a lunchbreak, do you
know about ginnungagap, vānimonimo, korekore,
cthulu, do you know what nothing feels like nested
octopus-like inside you? course you do

but have you really teased it open?
further, tasted mixed
metaphors about species unseeable, places we've got
names for
that were lost to the sea
in the ice age, and last year,
and this year, and i

impulse bought a new jacket today in constantinople
and i've decided it's gonna be all robinson crusoe from
now on

Solomona Vasa Davis, diasporate times / diasporate measures (Friday 28 Aug 2026, 2:20am)

Everything makes its opposite necessary.

Yesterday, in a rush, I accidentally left behind my copies of John Berger's Understanding a Photograph and Raymond Carver's What We Talk About When We Talk About Love on a table at the University of Canterbury, in a lecture theatre from which I teach. I had read precisely zero pages of the Carver book, and only three essays in the Berger collection.

I was unable to be attentive to the books I had chosen to read because my attention had been ring-fenced to my other work: they were short stories and essays I had, more or less, not chosen to read.

Today John Berger still burns a hole in my bag. I've got two books with me, each a kind of negative-copy of the books I accidentally lost, like replacements summoned from the psychoanalytic void – the x-thing summons its own future, its own alternate body. Berger's Understanding a Photograph becomes Berger's The White Bird. Carver's What We Talk About When We Talk About Love becomes Vladimir Sorokin's Blue Lard.

The replacements don't carry the same weight. A replacement never can. Like everything in postmodern reality (if that's even where we exist now), I've created a pastiche of my own taste with poor replacements. Stuck skimming the surface.

Take Berger's assertion (after André Bazin) that the animal dies through its hyper-visibility, which is in itself a form of invisibility. How would an animal think with this idea? What I mean to say is, how do Berger's essays and Carver's stories feel about being ignored?

I can't actually turn an analytical lens toward what I'd like to, because I lost it. All attention is the narrowing act of selection, the process of choosing to look at some things and not others. The coffee to the right of my hand, and the fact I don't own a water bottle, for instance.

If everything in the 21st century is lost before we think about it, what then?

Therefore, I can't actually turn my attention to the literary or critical task at hand for my attention is instead governed by the act of

selection, the process of choosing to attend to some things and not others.

Selection is a critical process in which things are reified into categories. I can't read or write for myself because I have to read and write for work. But what is work? What is my self? What is attention?

All I have to offer is that my contributions to Attention Studies have been the only part of my practice I've approached purely for myself this year. In a very radical way, Attention Studies has offered a framework

Put it this way. I can't recall the last time I stepped foot in an art gallery. That makes a critical object out of me.

Josiah Morgan, losing copies of John Berger and Raymond Carver because of being too busy working

He mānawa, he manawa

Look:
There it is, right
there.

From the edge of your eye,
catch a glimpse –
a nod, high on a wave,
an olive suede coat.

See? Your small, green heart.

Reach out to place
heart in hand,
hand to mouth.

Taste your small, green heart –
There's salt, sunlight, mud.

Open your small, green heart –

Nō hea koe?

Titiro:
Here I am, right
here.

With the fullness of your eye,
turn your head to gaze –
a carrier of breath,
made of many greens, softly painted.

Nō hea au?

I have pursued currents,
trailed tides,
shadowed stars.

I form islands, safe harbours,
forests of little gods.

Come, take my coat –

We cannot rest our feet here.

Tessa Boraston / Megan Tamati-Quennell's curator talk on the work of Ana Iti, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, July 2026

ISSN 3142-0656

Attention Studies, no. 6
September 2026

Published by The Physics Room, 301 Montreal Street,
Ōtautahi Christchurch 8013
Editing: Gwynneth Porter and Jane Wallace
Design: Warren Olds
© The Physics Room and the authors, 2026

This publication is funded by Creative New Zealand, Christchurch City Council, Rātā Foundation and with support from Tāwhia Copyright Aotearoa and Coffee Supreme